

7 CFR Part 3051—Audits of Institutions of Higher Education and Other Nonprofit Institutions;

7 CFR Part 3407—CSREES procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act;

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15B (USDA implementation of statute)—prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs; and

35 U.S.C. 200 *et seq.*—Bayh-Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR part 401).

#### **§ 3401.11 Other conditions.**

The Administrator may, with respect to any research project grant or to any class of awards, impose additional conditions prior to or at the time of any award when, in the Administrator's judgment, such conditions are necessary to assure or protect advancement of the approved project, the interests of the public, or the conservation of grant funds.

### **Subpart B—Scientific Peer Review of Research Applications for Funding**

#### **§ 3401.12 Establishment and operation of peer review groups.**

Subject to § 3401.7, the Administrator will adopt procedures for the conduct of peer reviews and the formulation of recommendations under § 3401.16.

#### **§ 3401.13 Composition of peer review groups.**

Peer review group members will be selected based upon their training or experience in relevant scientific or technical fields, taking into account the following factors:

(a) The level of formal scientific or technical education by the individual;

(b) The extent to which the individual has engaged in relevant research, the capacities in which the individual has done so (e.g., principal investigator, assistant), and the quality of such research;

(c) Professional recognition as reflected by awards and other honors received from scientific and professional

organizations outside of the Department;

(d) The need of the group to include within its membership experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific or technical fields;

(e) The need of the group to include within its membership experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., universities, industry, private consultant(s)) and geographic locations; and

(f) The need of the group to maintain a balanced membership, e.g., minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution.

#### **§ 3401.14 Conflicts of interest.**

Members of peer review groups covered by this part are subject to relevant provisions contained in Title 18 of the United States Code relating to criminal activity, Department regulations governing employee responsibilities and conduct (part 0 of this title), and Executive Order 11222 (3 CFR, 1964–1965 Comp., p. 306), as amended.

#### **§ 3401.15 Availability of information.**

Information regarding the peer review process will be made available to the extent permitted under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552), the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a.), and implementing Departmental regulations (part 1 of this title).

#### **§ 3401.16 Proposal review.**

(a) All research Applications for Funding will be acknowledged. Prior to technical examination, a preliminary review will be made for responsiveness to the request for proposals (e.g., relationship of application to research program area). Proposals that do not fall within the guidelines as stated in the annual request for proposals will be eliminated from competition and will be returned to the applicant. Proposals whose budgets exceed the maximum allowable amount for a particular program area as announced in the request for proposals may be considered as lying outside the guidelines.

(b) All applications will be reviewed carefully by the Administrator, qualified officers or employees of the Department, the respective merit review

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panel, and ad hoc reviewers, as required. Written comments will be solicited from ad hoc reviewers, when required, and individual written comments and in-depth discussions will be provided by peer review group members prior to recommending applications for funding. Applications will be ranked and support levels recommended within the limitation of total available funding for each research program area as announced in the applicable request for proposals.

(c) Except to the extent otherwise provided by law, such recommendations are advisory only and are not binding on program officers or on the awarding official.

**§ 3401.17 Review criteria.**

(a) Federally funded research supported under these provisions shall be designed to, among other things, accomplish one or more of the following purposes:

- (1) Improve management of rangelands as an integrated system and/or watershed;
- (2) Remedy unstable or unsatisfactory rangeland conditions;
- (3) Increase revegetation and/or rehabilitation of rangelands;
- (4) Examine the health of rangelands; and
- (5) Define economic parameters associated with rangelands.

(b) In carrying out its review under § 3401.16, the peer review panel will use the following form upon which the evaluation criteria to be used are enumerated, unless, pursuant to § 3401.7(a), different evaluation criteria are specified in the annual solicitation of proposals for a particular program:

Peer Panel Scoring Form

Proposal Identification No. \_\_\_\_\_

Institution and Project Title \_\_\_\_\_

I. Basic Requirement:

Proposal falls within guidelines? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No. If no, explain why proposal does not meet guidelines under comment section of this form.

II. Selection Criteria:

	Score 1–10	Weight factor	Score X weight factor	Comments
1. Overall scientific and technical quality of proposal .....	.....	10	.....	.....
2. Scientific and technical quality of the approach .....	.....	10	.....	.....
3. Relevance and importance of proposed research to solution of specific areas of inquiry .....	.....	6	.....	.....
4. Feasibility of attaining objectives; adequacy of professional training and experience, facilities and equipment .....	.....	5	.....	.....

Score \_\_\_\_\_

Summary Comments \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Proposals satisfactorily meeting the guidelines will be evaluated and scored by the peer review panel for each criterion utilizing a scale of 1 through 10. A score of one (1) will be considered low and a score of ten (10) will be considered high for each selection criterion. A weighted factor is used for each criterion.

**PART 3402—FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES NATIONAL NEEDS GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP GRANTS PROGRAM**

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